

Form a Safety Plan

Make sure you and your child have discussed and agreed on the following:

Emergency Contact Information:

- ✓ Your contact number and the number of the location where you will be (if applicable)
- ✓ Numbers of close family, friends, and neighbors that could help in the event you are not reached. This includes who the child can go to in the neighborhood (if possible).
- ✓ Ensure child knows when to dial 911
- ✓ Ensure child knows his/her address and phone number

Your family's conditions for staying home alone.* (See "Conditions for Being Left Alone" in this brochure.)

Additional Advice

- ✓ Do a test run through while staying close to home. Gradually increase the time you spend away from home until you are sure your child can adequately be left alone.
- ✓ Practice and discuss situations that might occur and how to best handle them.
- ✓ Check in periodically with the child or have a reliable adult check in.
- ✓ Seek out extracurricular activities that could be alternatives to leaving your child alone too often.

Source

Child Welfare Information Gateway.
(2013). *Leaving your child home alone*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Photos from:

http://thetutorpro.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/iStock_000006261879XSm-all-teen-students.jpg

<http://www.pbccs.org/images/preteen.jpg>



Contact Us

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Home Alone: Child Supervision Guidelines

Based on "Leaving Your Child Home Alone"
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Children's Bureau



Albemarle County

Department of Social Services



Factors that affect your decision to leave your child home alone

Because children mature at different ages and several factors influence whether it is safe to leave them home alone, please consider your child's...

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Developmental health
- Emotional health
- Feelings about staying home alone
- State laws and policies

Virginia does not have laws regarding when a child can be left home alone without supervision and for how long. That being said, at what age your child is left home alone is up to your discretion as the parent. Typically, a child under 8 lacks the capacity to have the appropriate judgment to be left alone safely.

Specific questions to ask to determine if your child is ready to stay home alone:

- ✓ Is your child physically, mentally, developmentally, and emotionally ready to take care of his/herself while you are away?
- ✓ Does your child have any special needs or currently receive special services (special education services, mental health treatment, previously engaged in delinquency, etc.)?
- ✓ Does your child know when to call 911?
- ✓ Can your child prepare food for his or herself while you are away?
- ✓ Does your child feel safe staying home alone?
- ✓ **Have you formed a safety plan?*** (See **“Form a Safety Plan”** in this brochure.)

Remember: You as the parent know your child best. It is up to you as a parent to ultimately decide if and when your child can be left home alone.

Conditions for being left alone

It is up to you as the parent to decide when and under what conditions can your child be left home alone.

- ✓ How long will your child be left home alone?
- ✓ When will your child be left alone—day or night? How does this affect the child?
- ✓ Will the child have to prepare food for his or herself? If so, can the child eat a meal that does not require using a stove or oven?
- ✓ Will the child be with other siblings? What are their responsibilities, if any, regarding other siblings left alone? Can the children get along safely during your absence?
- ✓ Can your child answer the door? If yes, to whom?
- ✓ Does your child have a key to the house and can they safely lock themselves in? Who can the child go to in the event they are locked out?
- ✓ Are friends allowed over?
- ✓ Can your child leave the house? If yes, where is your child allowed to go?
- ✓ What is your child allowed to do while home alone? (Ex. Rules regarding television, computer, oven, microwave usage, etc.)